

## Kay Granger

1943–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

REPUBLICAN FROM TEXAS

1997–



Image courtesy of the Member

**KAY GRANGER, THE FORMER MAYOR OF FORT WORTH**, won election in 1996 as the first Republican woman from Texas to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives. Congresswoman Granger quickly ascended the House leadership, serving as a Deputy Majority Whip and earning positions on the influential Appropriations Committee and the Select Homeland Security Committee. Her experience as a successful businesswoman and single mother of three children continues to influence her legislative work.

Kay Mullendore was born in Greenville, Texas, on January 18, 1943. Her parents divorced while she was a young teenager, leaving her mother, Alliene, to raise the family. “I was not self-made,” she recalled years later. “I was made by my mother.”<sup>1</sup> She earned a bachelor of science degree magna cum laude from Texas Wesleyan University in 1965 and considered a career in fashion design but followed her mother into teaching. She worked in the Birdville school district for nine years, teaching English literature and journalism. She married, raised three children, and later was divorced. To pay the mortgage and save for college tuition, Granger pursued a career as a life insurance agent. She opened a successful insurance agency, solidifying her ties to many key future constituents in the Fort Worth business community. From 1981 to 1989 she served as a member of the Fort Worth zoning commission. In 1989 she won election to the Fort Worth city council and, in 1991, was elected mayor, where she served until 1995. She brought an ambitious agenda to jump-start the Fort Worth economy that reeled from defense layoffs and a soaring per-capita crime rate. Granger’s “Code: Blue” programs included citizen patrol initiatives that halved the rampant crime rate and joint public–private sector programs that drew major businesses to the city. Her resuscitation of Fort Worth’s flagging economic fortunes drew national attention.

In 1996, when the incumbent Democratic Congressman for the Texas district encompassing Fort Worth decided to retire, Granger was the favorite to run for the seat. The mayoral post was nonpartisan, and both major parties enticed her to run under their banner. Running as a Republican in the November general election, Granger won by a 17 percent margin and, in her four subsequent re-election campaigns, has never been seriously challenged. As testimony to her popularity, Representative Granger is the first Republican in more than 100 years to represent the district which produced, among others, a former Democratic Speaker of the House. In 2004, Granger was elected in the newly reapportioned district, still covering Fort Worth, with 72 percent of the vote.<sup>2</sup>

When Congresswoman Granger was sworn into the 105th Congress (1997–1999) in January 1997, she was assigned immediately as a Deputy Whip and was named to an advisory board that consulted Speaker Newt Gingrich. She also received seats on three high-profile committees: Budget, House Oversight, and Transportation and Infrastructure. In 1997, she was appointed to the National Security Committee to fill the spot left vacant by the death of California Congressman Sonny Bono. In the 106th Congress (1999–2001) she resigned her previous posts to accept a seat on the powerful Appropriations Committee, where she currently serves on the Defense Subcommittee and the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Subcommittee.<sup>3</sup> In the 108th Congress (2003–2005), Granger took on an additional assignment as a member of the newly created Select Homeland Security Committee.

Congresswoman Granger's personal experience shaped many of her initiatives. In 1997, Granger successfully introduced legislation for tax-free education savings. When Republicans introduced a "comp time" bill to permit businesses to either pay over-time or give time off to employees who worked extra hours, Granger, as a working mother, defended the measure by arguing it would give workers more flexibility to deal with family matters.<sup>4</sup> A strong advocate for a balanced budget, Granger participated in developing historic balanced budgets in the late 1990s as a Budget Committee member. She also has secured funding for defense projects centered in her district, particularly companies which have worked to develop the Joint Strike Fighter, the F-22 Raptor, and the V-22 Osprey.<sup>5</sup> In the 106th Congress she served as vice chair of the Women's Caucus, supporting abortion rights and pushing the caucus to broaden its agenda to include women's retirement security and fair workplace standards. She also was a member of an informal group called the Renewal Alliance, a coalition of about two dozen House and Senate Republicans who support public-private partnerships to meet social needs and problems. Her fiscal conservatism coincided with moderation on social issues, including her support for affirmative-action admissions in public universities.<sup>6</sup> She has authored a book about American values, *What's Right About America*. As co-chair of the Iraqi Women's Caucus, Granger was the congressional leader in assisting Iraqi women to gain equal rights and to attain leadership positions.

## FOR FURTHER READING

*Biographical Directory of the U.S. Congress*, "Kay Granger,"  
<http://bioguide.congress.gov>

## NOTES

- 1 Jacquelynne Floyd, "Kay Granger: With Fort Worth in the Limelight, Its Mayor Basks in the Glow," 9 January 1994, *Dallas Morning News*: 1E; *Politics in America*, 2002 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Inc., 2001): 979.
- 2 "Election Statistics, 1920 to Present," <http://clerk.house.gov/members/electionInfo/elections.html>.
- 3 Karen Foerstel, *Biographical Dictionary of Congressional Women* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999): 100–101.
- 4 Foerstel, *Biographical Dictionary of Congressional Women*: 101; *Politics in America*, 2002: 978.
- 5 "Official Biography of Kay Granger," <http://kaygranger.house.gov/bio.asp> (accessed 10 December 2004).
- 6 Foerstel, *Biographical Dictionary of Congressional Women*: 101; *Politics in America*, 2002: 978.